MINUTES

NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS INVENTORY & MONITORING NETWORK
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Conference Call
8:30-10:00am MT, November 18, 2003

Members Participating

Dan Licht (lead) – Network I&M Coordinator
Phyllis Adams – Regional I&M Coordinator
Ruthann Knudson – Agate Fossil Beds NM
Brian Kenner (on behalf of Sandee Dingman) – Badlands NP
Jim Cheatham – Devils Tower NM
Bob Manasek – Scotts Bluff NM
Penny Knuckles – Theodore Roosevelt NP
Dan Roddy – Wind Cave NP

Members Absent

Andy Banta – Fort Union Trading Post NHS
Ted Benson – Fort Laramie NHS
Todd Suess – Jewel Cave NM
John Moeykens - Knife River Indian Villages NHS
Wayne Werkmeister – Missouri NRR
Eric Nelson – Mt. Rushmore NMEM
Carmen Blausey – Niobrara NSR

Also in Attendance

Peter Budde – Midwest Region GIS Specialist
Steve Hager – Theodore Roosevelt GIS Specialist
Amy Symstad – USGS Biological Resources Division
Marcia Wilson – Northern Great Plains I&M Program Biological Technician

Call Purpose and Background

To discuss how to spend the $50-65k in discretionary funds projected to be available in FY04. Prior to the call Licht had sent out an email to the Technical Committee that listed several possible projects (e.g., acquire remote imagery, conduct network-wide butterfly or fungi inventories, allow each park to pick their own project). Banta responded to the email saying he couldn't participate in the conference call, and that he preferred that the money be spent on larger projects, rather then giving $5k to each park and letting them spend it on projects of their own choosing. Blausey contacted Licht via phone on 11/17

saying that she would probably not participate in the call, and that she would like to use the money for satellite imagery, especially in regards to getting data on purple loosestrife. She said a butterfly inventory was her second choice.

Call Minutes

Licht convened the call by stating that the FY04 budget for the Northern Great Plains I&M Network would likely have about $50-65k of discretionary funds. These funds were the result of some lapse positions in prior fiscal years that allowed forward funding some projects through the CESU. He stated that the purpose of the conference call was to get a feel from the group as to their highest priorities. He said a final decision would probably need to be made around January, perhaps at the annual I&M meeting.

Kenner said he did not like simply dividing the funds among all 13 parks, i.e., letting each park pick their own $5k project. The others concurred with that.

Licht asked Budde to describe what options were available for using the funds to acquire remote imagery. Budde said that $50-60k wasn't enough to get quality (e.g., IKONOS) imagery for all the parks in the Network, primarily because the big parks would eat it all up. Specifically, Badlands NP did not have any imagery and would be very expensive. Theodore Roosevelt NP had imagery for the North Unit, but not the South Unit. Wind Cave NP was currently having some imagery processed.

Hager said they spent $20k to acquire IKONOS multi-spectral imagery at 4-meter resolution for the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt NP. He said they acquired the imagery for purposes of mapping leafy spurge. Hager also said that there was a government contract that could get a 20% discount on IKONOS and Quickbird imagery, but you had to be prepared to act quickly on it since the discount was only available at certain times.

Licht asked Budde if the Network should consider acquiring poorer quality, and hence, cheaper, imagery for the entire Network. Budde advised against that. He recommended that if the Network wanted to use the funds for remote imagery they should acquire quality imagery for those small parks in need of it. Budde also said that MRLC data (30-meter resolution) would be available for all parks in the very near future at no cost to the park. Licht asked if aerial (i.e., plane) imagery should be considered as an option. Both Budde and Hager said there were many advantages to satellite imagery (e.g., you get a single snapshot in time, less need to merge images) and they strongly recommended satellite imagery over imagery from planes. Knudson say they had acquired satellite imagery for Agate Fossil Beds NM and they found it very valuable.

Licht stated that Symstad had a proposal that he had not included in the email he sent out prior to the conference call. Symstad stated that she had just recently identified the need and hadn't fleshed out the details. She said she could use approximately $15k to test and refine the vegetation monitoring protocol she was developing for the Vital Signs

monitoring plan. Specifically, she stated that her current default protocol for vegetation monitoring was the Long-Term Ecological Monitoring/Prairie Cluster Prototype protocol and that it had been designed for tallgrass systems and had not been rigorously tested. She felt there was a need to test the protocol for use in our Network.

Licht asked the group what their preferences were for spending the funds. Knudson said she was interested in a butterfly inventory. Kenner stated the same. Cheatham raised the possibility of collecting baseline information on lichens for purposes of air quality monitoring. He stated that there was currently a 5-park $74k project in PMIS for such a study. Knuckles questioned whether such a study could be conducted across the entire Network based on the amount of dollars we had. Manasek said they had discussed the use of lichens at Scotts Bluff NM, but had decided against it in part because of their fire program. Adams stated that other Networks had looked at lichens but there were problems with using them as an indicator. Kenner stated that the existing lichen project in PMIS had been unsuccessful for a couple of years, perhaps due to a variety of reasons. The group concluded that lichens may not be a good use of the funds.

Roddy expressed an interest in a butterfly inventory. Knuckles said she would like to see a focus on pollinators. Cheatham wondered about the collection of baseline information for purposes of night sky monitoring. Licht stated that it was his impression that night sky was not a high priority in many parks, and that butterflies would more likely be monitored than night sky, and therefore, baseline data on butterflies might be more valuable.

After some more discussion by the group on the pros and cons of all the options, Licht asked each member for their recommendation. Knudson stated that she supported the acquisition of satellite imagery for the smaller parks that don't have it. Kenner also recommended acquiring remote imagery for the small parks; he said that Symstad's protocol testing ranked second in importance and the butterfly inventory third. Manasek ranked the testing of the vegetation monitoring protocol as the highest need and the acquisition of the remote imagery as the second highest. Knuckles stated that she felt that the acquisition of the satellite imagery was the highest need and the testing of the vegetation protocol was the second highest. Roddy felt that the acquisition of the imagery and testing of the vegetation protocol were important; however, he stated that if there was money left over it should go to a butterfly inventory.

In summary, the group consensus was to acquire quality satellite imagery for the small parks that needed it, or at least as much as we could afford. If there were funds available after that expenditure then Symstad's testing and refining of the vegetation protocol should be funded. A butterfly inventory was ranked as the third priority. Licht stated that he would look into the specifics of acquiring the satellite imagery. He stated that a final decision was probably not needed until about the time of the Technical Committee meeting in January and that he would share the notes of the conference call with other members of the Technical Committee.

Followup

Licht will get precise information on what the remote imagery needs of the Network parks are. He will also try and solicit input from those members not present.

Drafted by: Dan Licht
Drafted on: 11/18/2003

Finalized by:
Finalized on: